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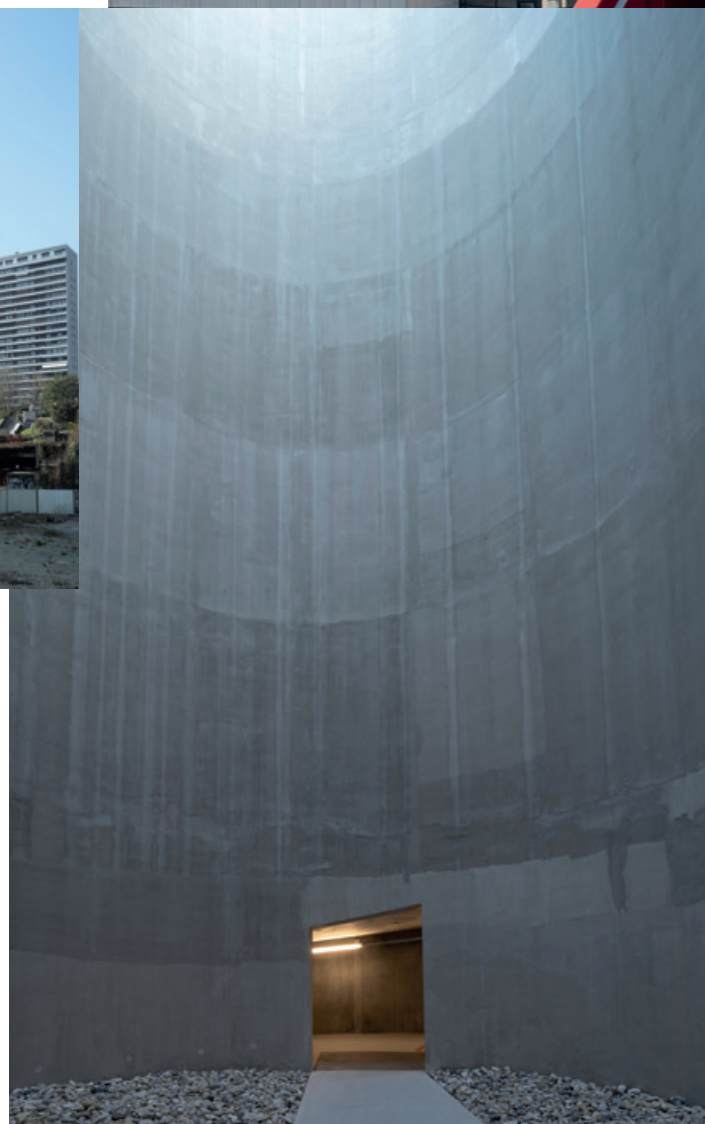
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# Parallel Parking



Photography by Cyrillic Weiner





# Q-Park Ravet Chambery, France Herault Arnod Architectures

Easing a large parking structure into the delicate centre of a small city is no simple matter. The condensed urban fabric of Chambery's historic core, the lovely mountains serving as backdrop, an adjacent tramline and river... all these added up to a context of challenges. Principal among those: don't ruin things with a normally brutal, low-budget hulk given over to ramps and guardrails. Herault Arnod was determined to produce a building of sensitivity in spite of its programme.

The 500-car facility occupies a triangular site on the Rue de Boigne within spitting distance of the more important public space here, and within view of the historic castle of the Dukes of Savoy. This site quality led the team to design the building with rounded corners to ease sight lines, elevation transparency and especially, an architect-suggested addition to the programme: a publicly-accessed belvedere. This latter is reached via a suspended red staircase clinging to the main facade, and thrusts out over the cornice as a cantilevered red pavilion visible from all directions; a beacon for visitors to come up and enjoy the views. The feature was conceived by artist Krijn de Koning.



But the project isn't all about the lipstick appendage; it's a fine urban piece in its own right. The gentle continuous ramps accommodate the cars in a continuous loop, and the elevations, which retain 50% openness to avoid fire restrictions, are graced with rhythms of vertical glass fins that offer different view angles by day, and become a lantern by night. At the centre of the triangle is a courtyard filled with plants, and a rotunda void wrapped by the car ramp is itself a showstopper space. It's not every day one finds a prosaic automobile storage facility with its own sense of style and even a couple architectural moments of joy.